

## **SBIR Newsletter Home**

If you have questions or subjects you would like covered, please contact [Linda Brander](#), SBIR Outreach Coordinator or call (406) 841-2749.

### **1.0 Proposals that Pop: An Interview with Gail and Jim Greenwood**

Considering that only one of every seven to ten SBIR proposals is funded, it pays to submit the very best proposal possible. That requires a good idea for an innovative product or technology, of course, but the nuts and bolts of proposal writing can also make or break the competitiveness of your grant application.

#### ***Give them what they want—A Compelling Case...***

Many proposers don't present a compelling case that distinguishes them from the crowd. "You have to give the agency a reason to pick your proposal over the others," says Gail Greenwood, owner with her husband, Jim, of the Greenwood Consulting Group, Sanibel Island, Fla.

One of the common weaknesses the Greenwoods see when reviewing SBIR proposals is no comprehensive workplan. This is a must. A competitive proposal details what work will be performed, how and when it will be done, and by whom.

Another commonly missed element is a credible feasibility question. Typically, a Phase I project seeks to demonstrate that an innovative approach will solve a problem or allow an opportunity to be exploited. Therefore, the proposal needs to reflect an effort to prove the feasibility of that innovation. "Unfortunately, the feasibility question often is missing, under-emphasized, or unjustified," says Jim Greenwood.

Another way to derail your proposal is to tell the agency reviewers far more than they care to know about the history behind the idea and its development. Include only material that is relevant to the project at hand. "Don't discuss how your technology can solve a ship-related problem when your proposal is going to the Army," he says. "The Army couldn't care less."

#### ***...how they want it.***

When writing the proposal, follow the format specified in the solicitation instructions. It seems simple enough, but it proves to be a pitfall for many. Don't, for example, omit sections that don't apply to your situation. If a section isn't relevant, include it with a "nonapplicable" statement.

The Greenwoods also emphasize using the same section names that appear in the guidelines. "If the guidelines refer to a section as 'Section 3. Significance of the Problem or Opportunity,' then the writer should use this title too. This makes it easier for the

reviewer to find a particular section or to verify that all requested sections are included,” says Gail Greenwood.

Also keep in mind that each agency has different formats and requirements for what is to be included in the various sections. Some also have supplemental instructions that must be followed. “The Department of Defense is famous for this,” she says. “There will be general instructions at the front of the DOD solicitation, but then each component has a supplemental set. The proposer is held to the supplemental instructions whenever there is a difference between the two sets of instructions.”

For more information about Greenwood Consulting, go to <http://g-jgreenwood.home.att.net>

## **2.0 Competition Tips: Perseverance Leads to a Good Prognosis for Land EKG**

### **If at first you don’t succeed....**

Like many SBIR grant seekers, Charley and Sara Orchard’s first attempt at an SBIR proposal sent them back to the drawing board. “The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) representative told us we had a great idea but that our focus was just marketing our business,” says Sara Orchard, Land EKG, Inc., Bozeman. That direction didn’t meet SBIR requirements.

Drawing on the expertise of researchers at Ag Research Stations in Miles City, MT and Las Cruces, NM and Montana State University professors in Bozeman, MT, the Orchards revamped their proposal. The new version focused on improving their land resource monitoring system to further develop a user-friendly ecological monitoring system. Such a system could become a means of standardizing methods used by ranchers, scientists, agencies and others to document land conditions.

The new proposal has all of the elements to be competitive.

Sara Orchard offers the following tips for others pursuing SBIR grants:

- Start early and persevere: It takes time to prepare and define your plan. The Orchards spent about 400 hours preparing their winning proposal. “The beauty of this is that if you don’t get the grant, you end up with a great work plan for the project and a tool to seek outside funding,” says Orchard.
- Use available resources: The Orchards attended several SBIR workshops. “It was so encouraging,” she says. “You’re in a room full of entrepreneurs and the synergy is incredible.”
- Have several people read the proposal. You know what you’re saying, but it is clear to others? The Orchards worked closely with SBIR consultant Chris Busch. “That made a big difference,” she says, particularly in helping them decipher the intent of the questions. “It’s difficult to know if you are thoroughly addressing

each section, clearly presenting and supporting your idea, as well as formatting the proposal to the agency's requests," says Orchard.

- Use lots of visuals: Pictures, charts and illustrations help to clarify a point, tell a story and lend credibility.
- Include endorsement letters and refer to them. "You can't be sure that the reviewers will take the time to read them, so by referring to them within the proposal, you add to the value of your expertise and the project," Orchard says.

### 3.0 Awards Congratulations to the March Phase 0 Award Winners

#### **A4S Technologies, Inc**

3973 T Highway 35

Kalispell, MT 59901

Voice: (406) 755-8618

**Phase 0 Title:** TransitWatch-Digital Surveillance System

Target Agency: Department of Transportation

Principal Investigator: [Jeff Heutmaker](#)

#### **Arctos Research**

P.O. Box 728

Plains, MT 59858

Voice: (406) 827-2820

**Phase 0 Title:** Development of Improved Materials & Methods for the Ignition of Prescribed Wild Land Fires

Target Agency: US Department of Agriculture

Principal Investigator: [Jeff Reistroffer](#)

### 4.0 Solicitations

Open Solicitations			
Program	Release Dates	Accepts Proposals	Closing Dates
<a href="#">NSF SBIR/STTR</a> for <a href="#">AM &amp; IT only</a>	1 Mar 2002	1 Mar 2002	12 June 2002
<a href="#">NSF SBIR/STTR</a> for <a href="#">BT &amp; EL only</a>	1 Mar 2002	10 Oct 2002	22 Jan 2003
<a href="#">DOT SBIR</a>	15 Feb 2002	15 Feb 2002	1 May 2002
<a href="#">DoD SBIR</a> - 2002	2 Jan 2002	1 Mar 2002	17 Apr 2002
<a href="#">HHS/NIH SBIR/STTR</a> (Grants)	15 Jan 2002	15 Jan 2002	1 Apr 2002 1 Aug 2002 1 Dec 2002
Non-Aids Related Topics			
<a href="#">HHS/NIH SBIR/STTR</a> (Grants)	15 Jan 2002	15 Jan 2002	1 Apr 2002 1 Aug 2002 1 Dec 2002
<a href="#">Aids Related Topics</a>			
<a href="#">HHS/CDC SBIR (Grants)</a>	15 Jan 2002	15 Jan 2002	1 Dec 2002
<a href="#">HHS/FDA SBIR (Grants)</a>	15 Jan 2002	15 Jan 2002	1 Apr 2002 1 Aug 2002 1 Dec 2002

For a complete overview of all solicitations go to: <http://www.zyn.com/sbir/scomp.htm>

### New Solicitation Changes at Department of Education

- Major improvements are in store for the U.S. Department of Education SBIR program. The two most significant changes proposed are: (1) transitioning the funding mechanism from a contract to a grant award and (2) raising the award level limits.
- **Phase I** will be raised from \$60,000 to **\$75,000** (beginning in FY 2002) and **Phase II** - from \$300,000 to **\$500,000** (beginning in FY 2003). To begin this transition, **the Department of Ed will issue two Phase I competition announcements in FY 2002.** The **PROJECTED** opening and closing dates for the DoEd are as follows:
  - **Opening Date** - April 2, 2002
  - **Closing Date** - June 10, 2002
- **There will be a Grant Program Announcement** for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and a **Contract Solicitation** for the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE).
- **FY 2002 Phase II** awards will be a firm fixed-priced contract with awards up to \$300,000. (These solicitations will be mailed to appropriate Phase I awardees.) Monitor the [Department of Education](#) web site for additional or verification of this information.

## 5.0 Conferences & Workshops

- ***The Pacific Northwest SBIR Conference***, May 1 & 2, Spokane, WA, Cost \$95. For more information go to: [www.Wafast.org](http://www.Wafast.org)
- ***Wyoming SBIR State Conference***, May 29 & 30, Thermopolis, Wyoming, Cost \$75 before May 15, \$100 after. For more information go to: [http://www.uwyo.edu/sbir/frm\\_confinfo.html](http://www.uwyo.edu/sbir/frm_confinfo.html)
- ***National SBIR Conference--Connecting People and Ideas with Resources and Funding***, June 11-13, 2002, Washington D. C. Cost not yet determined. For more information go to: [SBIRworld.com](http://SBIRworld.com)
- ***4th Annual National Institute of Health SBIR Conference***, June 21, 2002, Natcher Conference Center, Bethesda, Maryland. Free: Registration mandatory. For complete conference agenda and on-line registration, go to: <http://web.ncifcrf.gov/fcrdc/conf/sbir>

## 6.0 Resources

- Montana's [SBIR](#) web page has some [proposal development tools](#)
- Ohio's SBIR Program has developed a publication called [Proposal Preparation Guidelines](#)
- The Small Business High Technology Institute has a [Proposal Preparation Guide](#)

## **7.0 Subscriber's Comments**

If you are a winner of a Phase 1 proposal, how many hours did you devote to the proposal preparation process (include time spent gathering information, attending SBIR workshops, writing, editing, and composing the final draft)?

\_\_\_\_\_Total Hours Devoted to the Preparation of the Phase 1 Proposal

Would you like the SBIR Program to sponsor a proposal-writing seminar?

\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_No

Send your responses to [lbrander@state.mt.us](mailto:lbrander@state.mt.us)